

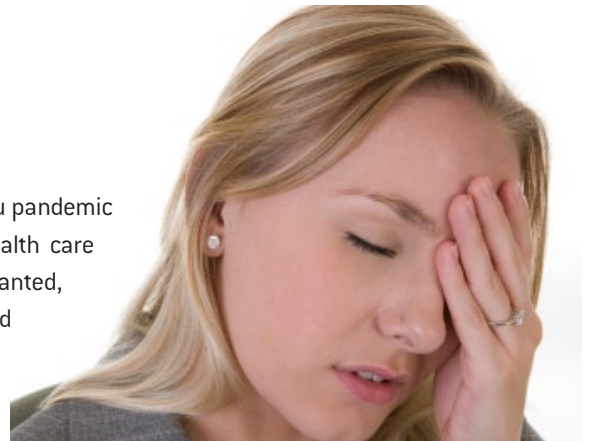
Module 6

Emotional Challenges of a Flu Pandemic

In this module, we will discuss:

- The emotional stress that a flu pandemic can generate
- Steps you can take
- Emotional health support services
- Where to get accurate and timely information

In Module 4, you learned how a flu pandemic could cause shortages of the health care resources most people take for granted, including doctors, medicines and hospital beds. Basic needs such as food and water may also be in limited supply.



A severe flu pandemic could strain society in ways few have imagined – much less experienced. In severe pandemics, government emergency health powers could limit where people go at a time when people want to travel to be close to, or care for, loved ones. Schools and businesses may close, and shortages of goods and services could increase as the pandemic spreads in waves across the country and globe.

At the same time, millions of Americans could face a series of emotional challenges, including fear, anxiety, sadness, depression and grief.

Normal Emotional Reactions

In some ways, a severe pandemic could affect emotional health differently than other types of events that have an impact on fewer people and don't last as long. Almost no place on earth will be safe from the touch of a severe flu pandemic.

There will be around-the-clock media coverage as the pandemic spreads across the globe in waves over months. All media, including television, radio, newspaper and online media, will cover it by the hour for weeks and months.



Pandemic Influenza Awareness Program

This program is made possible by the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness and the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services.

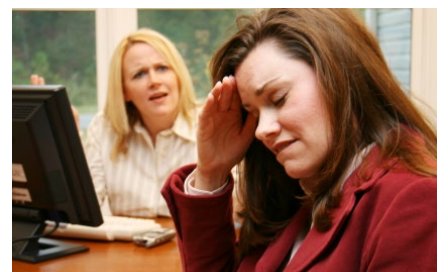
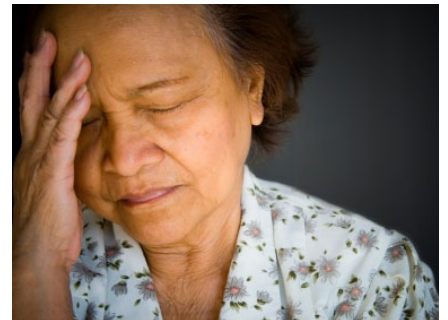
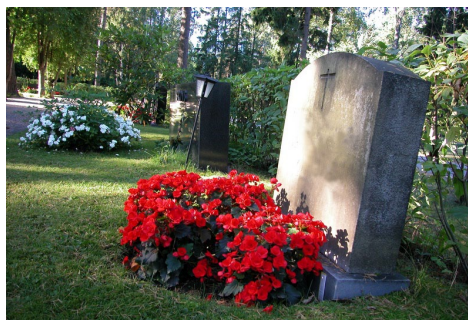




Shortages may challenge public trust if black markets appear to provide essential goods to the highest bidders.

Stress will build as the numbers of infections and deaths increase and spread with the movement of people across the globe. People may quickly find themselves dealing with a wide range of emotional challenges that include:

- Inability to reach loved ones and natural sources of support when they are needed most.
- The pain of seeing loved ones fall sick or die. There may be many deaths occurring “out of time.” In other words, many young, healthy people die before their parents. This unnatural occurrence will cause further emotional stress.
- Suspension of rituals: With a large number of deaths, traditional funerals may not be held. Religious services may be cancelled.
- Disruption of personal and family life as businesses and schools close.
- Stress due to the sudden loss of income due to unemployment or business failure.
- Fear and uncertainty caused by possible shortages of basic needs, from bottled water to canned soup to medications, as absenteeism reduces supply at the very time that demand for these goods peaks.
- Shortages may also challenge public trust if black markets appear to provide essential goods to the highest bidders. These public trust challenges may occur just as political leaders are making painful, but unavoidable ethical decisions, such as:
 - Who will receive food and medical supplies if they are in short supply?
 - Who gets access to scarce health care services?

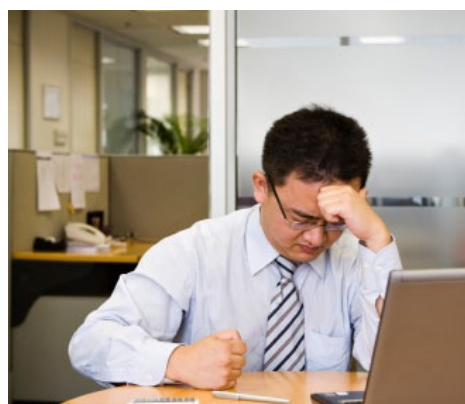


Your Personal Response

With so many powerful sources of stress striking world-wide, it is no surprise that mental health experts expect millions of people to feel anxious about both the spread of the disease and the fear of the unknown. Because stress can weaken your immune system, experts recommend that you focus on sources of support and control before and during a pandemic. Your sources of support can help strengthen your body and mind so you become more resilient in the short and long term.



The resources at the end of this module show you where to get help and provide tips on how families can help children cope with fear and anxiety.



QUIZ 1

What is resilience?

- ☐ A: The worsening of a pre-existing medical condition
- ☐ B: The feeling of losing control in a difficult situation
- ☐ C: Repeating the same mistake over again
- ☐ D: The ability to recover from disruptive change or setbacks and grow stronger in the process

Answers are at the end of this module.

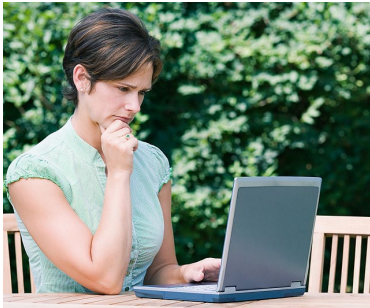
Steps You Can Take

Remember that in a pandemic you should use good social distancing strategies. Rather than gathering face-to-face, plan to connect by phone or electronically, through email, chat, texting, blogs or social networking websites. These electronic options allow you to share widely and openly without travel or close contact.

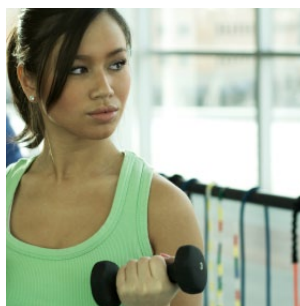
Be careful, however, not to focus too much on news reports, either from mass media or from the Internet. Gathering trustworthy, timely, accurate information is a healthy coping strategy for reducing anxiety during a pandemic. However, mental health experts recommend that you reduce exposure to graphic news stories and images – especially for children. And recognize that rumors and opinions will fill phone lines, the airwaves, the Internet and personal discussions. That's why it is so critical to seek and follow the recommendations of official sources of information, like those presented in these modules. Later in this module, we'll provide you with some helpful tips on how to evaluate public health information.

You also can expand your sense of control both *before* and *during* a pandemic.

- *Before* a pandemic arrives, take the actions that will reduce your chance of getting sick, and increase your options if you or your loved ones later fall ill.
- Review and complete the preparedness and planning steps outlined in Module 2. These are concrete actions that every individual and family can take to increase their ability to deal with the challenges of a pandemic.
- Improve your physical well-being. Stay healthy by being physically active and eating well. Make time for regular exercise and for planning and preparing meals that feature vegetables, fruits and whole grain products along with lean meats, fish, poultry, beans and low fat dairy products. Drink plenty of water and avoid excessive consumption of anything that can stress your body and its defenses, including sugar, salt, caffeine, alcohol and saturated fats.
- Learn about how pandemics occur and the history of pandemics. Find out which resources you will use to get reliable information when a pandemic occurs.
- Stay busy mentally. Express yourself through writing, drawing, music and other arts.
- Find ways to enjoy yourself, to restore both mind and body. Any hobby or calming pastime, from knitting and journal-writing to reading and playing video games, can bring needed periods of stress relief. You may also find comfort in your personal beliefs or spirituality.



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You are not alone in this. Mental health professionals at the local, state, federal and global levels are developing tools and strategies to assist people to prepare for and cope with major events.

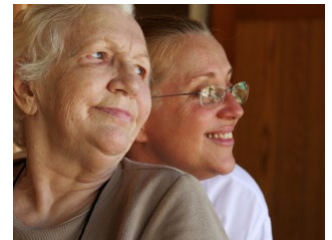
When a pandemic arrives, take action in areas you can control:

- Do your part to limit the spread of infection by demonstrating and teaching others proper covering of coughs and sneezes as well as hand washing, as discussed in Module 3.
- Stay away from people but reach out to your support network by phone or electronically.
- Maintain as much of your normal daily routine as possible.
- If you or someone you know is having a hard time managing their emotions, get help from a medical or mental health professional.

Support Services to Build Resilience

You are not alone in this. Mental health professionals at the local, state, federal and global levels are developing tools and strategies to assist people to prepare for and cope with major events. This includes training staff to help respond to the emotional stress expected before, during and after a flu pandemic. New Jersey residents will benefit from these activities that are already underway:

- Training crisis counselors and other professionals, such as clergy and school nurses
- Supporting staff for 24-hour mental health help lines in collaboration with the Mental Health Association in New Jersey
- Providing web-based counseling services, which are listed at the end of this module
- Providing phone-based counseling services, such as those offered by the New Jersey Department of Human Services at 1-877-294-4357 (HELP) and TTY 1-877-294-4356



Read the *Coping with Your Emotions During Public Health Emergencies* resource at the end of this module.

QUIZ 2

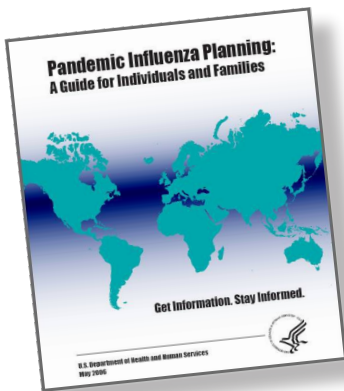
All of these are ways to cope with the emotional challenges of a flu pandemic, EXCEPT:

- ☐ A: Find ways to stay busy mentally through writing, music or other arts
- ☐ B: Identify your natural sources of support
- ☐ C: Listen to news reports constantly to find out what's going on with the pandemic
- ☐ D: Maintain as much of your daily routine as possible

Answers are at the end of this module.

Evaluating Information

Knowing where to go for trustworthy, timely and accurate information will be very important during a flu pandemic. There are many potential sources of information, including radio and television programs, print media such as newspapers, books and magazines, as well as Internet sites. The amount of information can be overwhelming, and it's hard to know whom to believe. Here are some tips.



You should be able to easily identify the author or organization responsible for the information. The source should be well-known and have a good reputation. This includes print media as well as Internet sites.

- You should be able to easily identify the author or organization responsible for the information. The source should be well-known and have a good reputation. This includes print media as well as Internet sites. Examples include the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services and the American Red Cross.
- Is the information timely and updated to reflect the current situation? You should be able to tell how recent the information is, and you should read the most recent first.
- This applies to websites as well – check for the “last updated” or “last revised” date at the bottom of a webpage to see when this was done.
- Every source of information – television news programs, books, websites, etc. – may include the opinions of its authors, but not tell you that. This is called bias (pronounced “bahy-uhs”). The author may have personal, political or professional interests in presenting only one side of the issue, so always check the source before believing what you read or hear.
- Read more than one source of information. That will help you see if there is any bias in the content.
- You should be able to find out if the person or group providing the information has the required knowledge and training necessary to be a reliable source. Medical information is generally better if it comes from a government health agency, well-known medical institution, or an organization that brings together respected medical professionals.
- Don't just accept something because it looks real or claims the information came from a dependable source. Decide if the information goes along with what other trusted sources are saying.



EVALUATING INTERNET RESOURCES

When evaluating online sources, the web site address (URL) provides you with additional clues about the credibility of the information source. Web sites with relatively short URLs that end in “.gov,” and “.edu,” are generally found to be credible, but make sure you still use the tips that were just described.

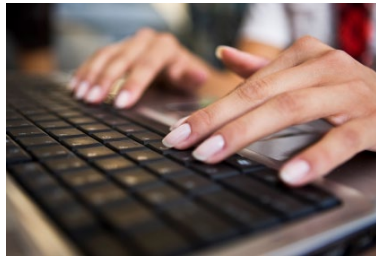
- .gov is a government site
- .edu is an accredited post-secondary educational institution

You may have to be more critical of websites that end with:

- .com, a commercial, for-profit entity
- .net, an internet-based computer network
- .org, a non-commercial, not-for-profit entity

You may see URLs with other endings, but the ones we mentioned are the most common and tell you the most about your information source. Remember that information from “.gov” addresses comes directly from the U.S., state or local governments – well-recognized and reliable sources for public health information.

It's especially important to carefully evaluate what you see on the internet, where anyone can post anything. That's why you should question the information you receive and make your own informed judgments about its accuracy.



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QUIZ 3

What does it mean to be biased?

- ☐ A: When an author quotes reliable authorities
- ☐ B: When an author provides too much information
- ☐ C: When an author states their own opinion as “fact”
- ☐ D: When an author presents both sides of information fairly

Answers are at the end of this module.



A flu pandemic is an act of nature that, as of now, scientists cannot prevent. However, we can decrease the impact that a flu pandemic can have on our physical and emotional health.

MODULE 6 ANSWERS

QUIZ 1: D – ABILITY TO RECOVER

Resilience is the ability to recover from disruptive change or setbacks and grow stronger in the process. Long-term strategies that build resilience will be critical for both physical and emotional health.

QUIZ 2: C – LIMIT YOUR EXPOSURE

Limit your exposure to graphic news stories and images. This can cause increased stress and anxiety.

QUIZ 3: C – OPINION AS “FACT”

The author may have personal, political or professional reasons for giving only one side of the issue.

Everyone’s Responsibility

A flu pandemic is an act of nature that, as of now, scientists cannot prevent. However, we can decrease the impact that a flu pandemic can have on our physical and emotional health. Taking on that responsibility begins today – *before* a pandemic arrives. By taking action *now* – as well as during a pandemic and in the months that follow – both individuals and entire communities can better overcome the challenges a flu pandemic may bring.



Let’s Review!

- People will deal with a wide range of emotional challenges.
- It’s important to build emotional strength and resilience in advance.
- Take actions that will reduce your chance of getting sick and increase your options if you or your loved ones later fall ill.
- Know where to get help to cope with the emotional stress of a pandemic.
- Be able to identify reliable sources of public health information.

RESOURCES FOR MODULE 6

- New Jersey Division of Mental Health Services, Disaster and Terrorism Branch
www.disastermentalhealthnj.com
- New Jersey Disaster Mental Health Helpline
Help line: 1-877-294-HELP (4357) and TTY: 1-877-294-4356
- New Jersey’s mental health information and referral service
www.njmentalhealthcares.org
- *How Families Can Help Children Cope with Fear and Anxiety*, from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/Ca-0022/default.asp
- *Coping With Your Emotions During Public Health Emergencies* brochure (shown at the end of this module), from the New Jersey Department of Human Services, available online at
www.disastermentalhealthnj.com/professional_resource.htm

Stay Connected

The fear associated with a public health emergency can push people apart.

People who are normally close to family and friends may avoid contact because they are afraid they might get sick or get someone else sick.

It is important to stay connected with others. Use the phone, e-mail, or other electronic means of communication.

If you are anxious about a health risk, talk to someone who can help. This may be your doctor, a family member, friend, member of the clergy, teacher or mental health professional.

If you notice a big change in a loved one, friend or co-worker, reach out to them. Make some time to talk. Watching out for others shows you care. It can be comforting to both of you.

If you or someone you know is having a hard time managing their emotions, seek help from a medical or mental health professional.

Get Reliable Information

When we face uncertainty about health risks, it is important to keep things in perspective.

Get information during public health emergencies from:

- Your doctor or healthcare provider
- Your local health department
- The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) website at <http://nj.gov/health/> (800) 367-6543

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

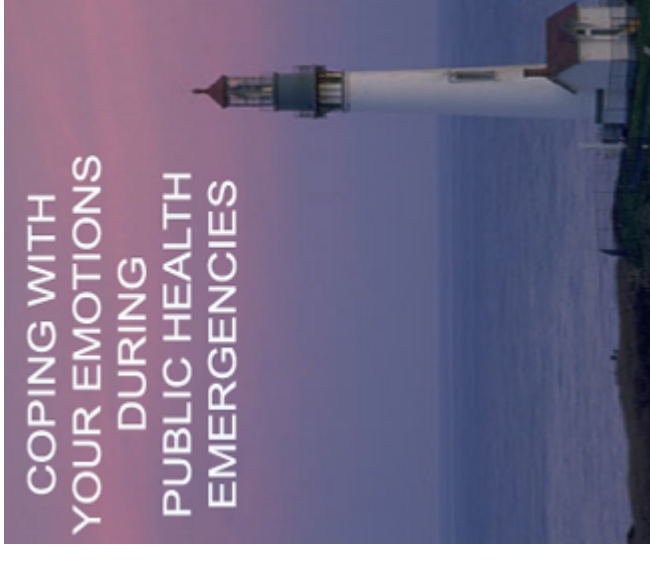
1-800-CDC-INFO (4636)
for assistance in English
and Spanish

TTY: 1-888-232-6348

E-mail: cdcinfo@cdc.gov

**This publication available on-line at
www.disastermentalhealthnj.com.**

Produced in cooperation with the
New Jersey Department of
Health and Senior Services.



New Jersey Department of Human Services

**Toll-free Helpline
877-294-HELP (4357)**

TTY: 877-294-4356

**Trained counselors
available free of charge
24 hours a day**



Handling Public Health Emergencies

The information in this brochure can help you cope with anxiety related to public health emergencies.

It is natural to be upset when you think the health – or the health of your loved ones - is threatened.

Pay attention to your own feelings and take care of your own emotional needs. You can better help friends and family members handle their concerns.

Uncertainty

Anxiety can be related to fear of the unknown. It is normal to feel anxious and worried about a spreading disease, especially if there is no known cause or cure.



Everyone reacts differently to a public health risk. These are normal reactions:

Physical

headaches
tiredness
increased pulse
high blood pressure
changes in appetite
unexplained aches or pains
trouble sleeping
stomach aches

Emotional

panic
anxiety
distrust
fear
anger
irritability
sadness
depression
blame
feeling overwhelmed
increased stress

Mental

troubling concentrating
problems at work or school
memory problems
troubling thoughts
concern about health issues

Behavioral

avoiding others
substance abuse
excessive cleaning or washing
being overly cautious

Here are some ways you can cope with stress and anxiety:

- Limit your exposure to graphic news stories
- Get accurate, timely information from reliable sources
- Educate yourself about the specific health hazard
- Maintain your normal daily routine, if possible
- Exercise, eat well and rest
- Stay active – physically and mentally
- Stay in touch with family and friends
- Find comfort in your spiritual and personal beliefs
- Keep a sense of humor
- Share your concerns with others



Information and Resources

The following resources, listed by module, were discussed in this program. Duplicate listings have been deleted. Be sure to check these websites regularly for updated information.

MODULE 1: PANDEMIC FLU BASICS

- *Is it a Cold or the Flu?*, from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services
www.state.nj.us/health/flu/fluorcold.shtml
- *Cover Your Cough*, from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm
- *When Should You Wash Your Hands*, from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services
www.nj.gov/health/flu/documents/when_to_wash_hands.pdf
- www.pandemicflu.gov
- www.njflupandemic.gov

MODULE 2: PERSONAL PLANNING

- *Pandemic Flu Personal Emergency Plan*, from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services www.nj.gov/health/flu/documents/emergency_plan.pdf
- *Preparing for Disaster for People with Disabilities and Other Special Needs*, from Homeland Security, FEMA and the American Red Cross www.fema.gov/pdf/library/pfd_all.pdf
- During a flu pandemic, this website will also provide information for people with special needs
www.disabilitypreparedness.gov
- *Advance Directives for Health Care: Planning Ahead for Important Health Care Decisions*, from the New Jersey Bioethics Commission www.state.nj.us/health/healthfacilities/publications.shtml
- *Food and Water in an Emergency*, from Homeland Security, FEMA and the American Red Cross
www.fema.gov/pdf/library/f&web.pdf

MODULE 3: RISK REDUCTION

- *Wash Your Hands* and other materials available in English and Spanish, with special materials for children, from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services
www.state.nj.us/health/cd/handwashing.shtml
- *Use of Facemasks and Respirators in the Community*, adapted from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.nj.gov/health/flu/documents/facemasks_and_respirators.pdf.
For updates, visit: www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/maskguidancecommunity.html

MODULE 4: IMPACT ON HEALTH CARE

- *Isolation and Quarantine Fact Sheet*, from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services www.nj.gov/health/flu/documents/isolation_and_quarantine.pdf
- *Caring for the Flu at Home: A Self-Help Guide*, from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services www.nj.gov/health/flu/documents/flu_guide.pdf

MODULE 5: PANDEMIC FLU AND THE WORKPLACE

- *Workplace Planning*, a webpage at www.pandemicflu.gov, managed by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/workplaceplanning/index.html

Other resources on this site include:

- *Planning Checklists for Employers*
www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/checklists.html
- *Workplace Questions for Employees*
www.pandemicflu.gov/faq/workplace_questions/index.html

MODULE 6: EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES OF A FLU PANDEMIC

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- New Jersey Disaster Mental Health Helpline
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- *How Families Can Help Children Cope with Fear and Anxiety*, from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/Ca-0022/default.asp
- *Coping With Your Emotions During Public Health Emergencies*, from the New Jersey Department of Human Services, available online at www.disastermentalhealthnj.com/professional_resource.htm